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SUBJECT: Goma Report for September 24: More FARDC  
Attacks to north, east; Goma remains calm

REF: Kinshasa 799

1. (SBU) Summary: FARDC attacked CNDP on a new front September 24, adding to its ceasefire violations over the past week. North Kivu brigade commander feels duped by FARDC. The city of Goma remained quiet throughout the day.  
End Summary.

2. (SBU) Despite another reaffirmation by the government of its adherence to the ceasefire and disengagement plan, this time at the Amani steering committee meeting in Bukavu (reftel), the FARDC continued September 24 to violate the ceasefire. CNDP appears to have pushed back FARDC at Kashuga, in the northwest extremity of CNDP terrain. But FARDC has attacked CNDP along several other points in the northern area, capturing Buranda, between Bambu and Tongo (one area where there had been no significant fighting over the past month). FARDC also unleashed a prolonged artillery barrage against CNDP at two points in the eastern (Rutshuru) corridor, in the Rugari area and to the east of Rumangabo. According to certain reports, CNDP retook Kanombe (east of Rumangabo), but North Kivu brigade has not yet attributed a ceasefire violation to CNDP there.

3. (SBU) North Kivu commander Brigadier General Rawat told poloff midday September 24 that he had been watching a build up of FARDC forces in the Katsiru (northern) area for some days. He said that, in the early morning September 24, FARDC attacked at several points east of Katsiru and captured Buranda. A local FARDC commander there said he would fire on North Kivu brigade if it attempted to intervene. Exchange of fire persisted there through the day, as well as in the Rugari and Kanombe areas. Rawat said that these events dimmed the prospects that FARDC would abide by its commitment to the disengagement plan, specifically, its undertaking to withdraw from Ntamugenga, Mutabo, and Kisherero tomorrow, September 25 (D-Day plus seven).

4. (SBU) Repeated FARDC ceasefire violations had, Rawat said, discredited MONUC as a "neutral party in partnership with the government," such that North Kivu brigade was beginning to find it difficult to maintain any contact with CNDP commanders on the ground. FARDC, he said, had requested MONUC's assistance, for example in using its attack helicopters, but Rawat said for the time being it was "best to leave things alone and let each side jostle each other without our intervention." Rawat judged that Kivus commander General Lukama, with whom he has had daily contact, was being by-passed by colonels under his command (either acting on their own or by command from Kinshasa, or both).

5. (U) The city of Goma, scene of civil disturbances in recent days, returned to calm September 23, with no further strife reported September 24.

6. (SBU) Comment: It is conceivable that FARDC's brief occupation of Kashuga was a feint to draw CNDP's attention away from its real aim of pressing an attack east of Katsiru. CNDP will presumably

counterattack at Buranda. The FARDC's objective in taking Buranda -- the one theater that had seen no major recent military activity -- is unclear, nor is it evident whether this attack, or any recent attacks, were a concerted strategy (apparently by-passing Lukama) versus opportunistic actions taken by local commanders. But they have hugely undermined the government's embrace of the disengagement plan. End comment.

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